PEOPLES & CULTURES OF NIGERIA

Edited by:

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To the memory of

Professor ULF Himmelstrand, the founding father of Sociology in Nigeria

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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PEOPLES, CULTURE AND THE MASS MEDIA
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Introduction

Man as a social being cannot live outside his society and other governing agents that conduct the affairs of his existence. One of these governing agents is culture. Every person is born into an existence culture, which must be learned and which shapes his/her life. This explains why the social scientist sees culture as the entire way of life within a society. As a phenomenon that is shared or held in common by group, culture goes beyond often more deeply rooted and stable; it is not easily transitory. In line with this, culture could be said to be "the sum total of the learned behavior of a group of people which are generally considered to be the tradition of that people and are transmitted from generation to generation" (Sitaram, 1970). Salazar (2006: 321-322)) and Ogunbameru (2000: 50-52) see culture as "the aggregate of all non-genetically inherited information, the modes of organizing and preserving information."

Culture emerges as shared historical experiences of a given society which of course is continuous and ever changing and developing. Culture is not merely a return to the custom of past, but it embodies the attitudes of people to the future of their traditional values faced with the demands of modern technology which is an essential factor of development and progress. Cultures do not exist in isolation as human groups relate to one another, which result in borrowing and fusion. For example, culture could evolve from that of others who are their immediate neighbours. This is deductible from language, religious worship, festive and other cultural elements (Ayakoroma, 2011). As a starting point, when expressing one identity to others, culture is complex, and it includes characteristics which go beyond ethnicity and religion.

In Nigeria, what many refer to as culture according to Olaide (2000) are traces of achievement of our forefathers at various levels of stages of their development and the cumulative knowledge of these various achievements. The implication of this is that culture can be found in our political institutions, our literature, and our language and even in our moral values. Not only this, the moral value of a particular group of people is also an embodiment of their culture. What an individual learns morally and the values he acquires thus depend on the culture, in which one develops and the activities and institutions that surround one's life.

Community life is almost the same with culture of the people, and this entails activities within the regulation and scope of culture which morality also takes cognizance of. The number and kinds of people in a community have a great influence on the type of community, and this is where the traditions of such people have a great role to play. Traditions are the customs, practices, bits of legend and folklore, and legends go a long way in establishing the community life, that tangible quality which makes it different in spirit from other communities in the same circumstances (Warren, 1965).

Posner (1988) describes culture as constituting to the community and to society what memory is to the individual. It shapes individual and group attitudes and behavior because it is based on shared history and the human needs for recognition. Thus, it could be said that cultures cut across identities and boundaries because of historical relations between groups in term of trade, inter-tribal marriages and diplomatic relations. There are many different people, groups and tribes across the

continent of Africa with cultural peculiarity varying from tribe to tribe. Gender, class, physical and mental abilities, religious and spiritual beliefs, sexual orientation, age and other factors influence cultural orientations. In view of the fact that individuals make up a complex weave of cultural influences, it is impossible to define any person by a single cultural label. Cultural histories are filtered by experience and psychological characteristics, making each person unique.

African culture is incredibly interesting because it is so diverse. Every African country is a mix of tribes each with their own unique language and culture. Nigeria is classified as a country with ethnic diversity; this is reflected in the fact that the country has over 250 identified ethnic groups. Three very large ethno-linguistic entities dominate: the Hausa-Fulani, the Igbo and the Yoruba. The concern of this paper is to examine how people make a mutual understanding among themselves, most especially intra-ethnic communication. Particular interest is on communication styles, traditional forms of information dissemination and the media through which such forms of information are passed. Conscious efforts at learning about and understanding of idea of people, their culture and communication become necessary in order to a avoid wrong assumption that particular beliefs and values are normal at the expense of those who hold different beliefs or values. This essay however focuses on traditional societies in the first instance and the influence and relationship this has on contemporary society. At the same time, it aims at defining and understanding the practice of mass media within the traditional settings, most especially the situation of things among the three dominant ethnic groups in Nigeria (Hausa/Fulani, Igbo and Yoruba). In the course of this, effort will be on information dissemination process. and most often the concepts of mass media and communication will be used interchangeably.

What is Mass Media?

Mass media is any medium used to transmit mass communication. Until recently mass media was clearly defined and was comprised of the eight mass media industries: Books, Newspapers, Magazines, and Recordings, Radio, Movies, Television and The Internet. Mass media is media which is intended for a large audience. It may take the form of broadcast media, as in the case of television and radio, or print media, like newspapers and magazines. Internet media can also attain mass media status, and many mass media outlets maintain a web presence to take advantage of the ready availability of Internet in many regions of the world. Many people around the world rely on the mass media for news and entertainment, and globally, mass media is a huge industry.

Usually, mass media aims to reach a very large market, such as the entire population of a country. By contrast, local media covers a much smaller population and area, focusing on regional news of interest. The summary of what Mass media refers to include all media technologies which are intended to reach a large audience via mass communication.

Functions of Mass Media in Society

The media offers entertainment, culture, news, sports, and education. To politicians, artistes, celebrities and advertisers, the media is essential but of course they also matter to everyone else, including teachers, doctors, and lawyers as they depend on the media for information. On many occasions, the images and information in the media that are

reflected through news broadcasts, situation comedies, talk shows, plays, advertisements, press photos, e-mail and the like are reflection of our society (Kolawole *et. al.,* 2011). When visual images and graphics are used in the media, the images passed are retained in the brain even long after they have been watched and can be replicated (Adebola, 2007).

The news media focus the public's attention on certain personalities and issues, leading many people to form opinions about them. The mass media can also reinforce latent attitudes and "activate" them, prompting people to take action. Just before an election, for example, voters who earlier had only a mild preference for one party or candidate may be inspired by media coverage not only to take the trouble to vote but perhaps also to contribute money or help a party organization in some other ways (Obi, 2000).

The mass media play another important role by letting individuals know what other people think and by giving political leaders large audiences. In this way, the media make it possible for public opinion to encompass large numbers of individuals and wide geographic areas. In areas where the mass media are thinly spread, as in developing countries or in countries where the media are strictly controlled, word of mouth can sometimes perform the same functions as the press and broadcasting, though on a more limited scale. In developing countries, it is common for those who are literate to read from newspapers to those who are not, or for large numbers of persons to gather around the village radio or a community television. Word of mouth in the marketplace or neighbourhood then carries the information farther (Davidson and Worcester, 2009). In countries where important news is suppressed by the government, a great deal of information is transmitted by rumour. Word of mouth (or other forms of person-to-person communication) thus becomes the vehicle for underground public opinion in totalitarian countries; however, these processes are slower and usually involve fewer people than in countries where the media network is dense and uncontrolled. Four major roles of the mass media as agents of publicity and awareness creation have been documented (see Atolagbe, 2007):

- **Acting as Sentinel:** Through their roles in keeping us informed about things going on around us
- **Acting as Arena:** This comes up in the form of giving us publicity to events so as to make the masses arrive at a consensus.
- **Acting as Instructor:** The mass media do this by telling people about others and how these others do things with a view to learning from them.
- **Acting as Social and Political regulator:** This takes the form of providing the citizens, the information about what occur in the world with a view to making us (especially leaders) have the right attitude to the government and national assignments.

The mass media promote overall social cohesion; the strength of such social cohesion depends upon the strength by which the mass media are able to attract attention. Media in competition are continually trying to attract attention more strongly from more people and groups, by generating wider choice. People differ; so also are their preferences which vary according to age, sex, region, religion, politics, hobbies and countless other special interests. Thus, two members of the public will attend to

precisely the same elements of the mass media, and the evaluations of any given media item may be multiple and opposite (Charlton, 2006).

Communication and Traditional Communication System

In Africa, the uniqueness of the continent is not limited to customs, tradition and culture, but in its means of communication. African means of communication are embedded in their originality, creativity, tradition and culture of the people. These essentially make them highly effective and enduring in the dissemination of information personally, inter-personally and through group communications. However, the enduring nature of the African means of communication has actually made them to subsist and remain relevant in the contemporary world despite the emergence of organs of mass communication like books, newspapers, magazines, radio, television, telex, facsimile, internet and the social media.

Traditional Communication Systems include all organised processes of production and exchange of information managed by rural communities. Their tools, like traditional theatre, masks and puppets performances, tales, proverbs, riddles and songs, should be seen as a cultural and endogenous response to different community needs for information, education, social protest and entertainment. These systems are often used to solve the contradiction between the need for change (development) of a rural community and the need to preserve its cultural values.

In oral society, the conditions of cultural continuity are much more limited than today. In a wholly oral culture, meaning in language is highly specific and local. The context of oral culture is the memory, asked to store and keep accessible what is relevant (Inglis, 1990). Oral traditions used verbal messages that are reported statements from the past beyond the present generation. The messages are oral statements spoken, sung or called out on musical instruments (Vansina, 1985).

Among the inter-personal forms of communication which traditional societies used or rural people still use to receive and give information are the family and neighbourhood, friends and acquaintances, markets and washing areas, and festival gatherings for the village. Institutional networks involve the church or religious networks, the administrative structure, the political party, the school, police and army, and such government service agents as agricultural extension, health, and family planning among others that may operate in the village. The cultures of small-scale societies are cultures of face-to-face oral flows of meaning. The cultures of complex societies on the other hand now make use of writing, print, radio, telephones, telegraph, photography, film, disk, and tape recording, television, radio and computers.

The major concern of communication in whatever medium that the process is being employed is to pass information across to a particular segment of the society or to the general public. The medium that is used in one geopolitical entity may differ from the other. At the same time, the processes do change with improvement in level of technology obtainable in such an environment. This explains the rationale behind variation in modes and patterns of information dissemination in traditional setting and modern society.

Traditional communicative systems also change with the passage of time with the changing environment and needs of the society. The traditional symbols deriving out of the environment may also change with the changing environment. Thus, a

symbol derived out of an object in any traditional society may acquire a different connotation with the disappearance of the object itself (Ghosh, 2010).

Communication Patterns in Traditional Societies

In traditional societies (Gellner, 1988; Charlton and Andras, 2003) the mass media essentially functioned as an instrument of ideological control, producing heavily censored 'propaganda' on behalf of the ruling powers who controlled the media – and this situation continued through the earlier stages of industrialization before the evolution of the modern mass media. This was possible because the mass media faced little or no competition: books were expensive and copying text was technically difficult, while early broadcast media comprised only a handful of channels. Therefore, mass media of feudal, totalitarian and theocratic societies were essentially monolithic in their communications and manipulative in their intentions (Chomsky, 1989; Gellner, 1988).

But the modern mass media are different. Although printing was invented in the Middle Ages and had a massive impact – allowing much larger and more complex societies to be administered (McLuhan, 1962; Wright, 2000) - the first modern mass media were probably delayed until there was an excess production of printed communications such as cheap newspapers and stories, relative freedom from censorship, a mostly-literate population and also effective consumer choice between media. Since that time, according to Charlton (2006), media-providers have increasingly needed to compete for limited public attention both within media (for example, competition between radio stations, or between channels on TV) and between media (for example, competition between the news on TV, radio, newspapers and the internet).

Information in traditional societies is disseminated both horizontally and vertically. Such information is relayed through the town crier to the villagers (audience) publicly and simultaneously or indirectly to the compound heads who in turn delivers the message vertically to the people through the family heads. Messages that originate from these sources are of diverse nature. They range from developmental messages like school building to social, economic, political and traditional ones. The messages are communicated with dates of certain festivals (cultural), the developmental messages like building, cutting and clearing of roads, use of general group dialogue, or individual discretion of the town announcer.

Similarly, social messages like proclamation, banning certain domestic animals from wandering round the village use various communication modalities, but exclusively these use the masquerade for communication and enforcement. These messages pass through a nexus of stages. From the source – Oba, Emir, and Council of Elders whose deliberations occasioned the order, to the village square meeting. This is equivalent to the referendum in modern democracy; then to the town crier who timely reminds the people of the messages and accelerates people's compliance. In the same vein, other messages, apart from the local ones, from local government, special messages from national and state levels circulate round the village to both groups and individuals, vertically, and horizontally.

Functions of Traditional Communication

Traditional communication systems change with the passage of time with the changing environment and needs of the society. The traditional symbols deriving out of the environment may also change with the changing environment. Traditional forms of communication are for instance myths; story-telling; songs; proverbs; religious rituals; artistic, musical, dance and theatrical elements, as well as ornaments depicted on pottery, textiles and wood. These forms differ greatly from one another, being characterized - among others - by their own particular society and by economic, social and religious characteristics. Myths give warning to reflections and observations of nature and human beings. They convey a view of life, depicting the position of human beings. On this basis, values and standards are shared and rules laid down concerning behaviour towards nature and relationships between men. Traditional communication fulfils several functions, including the following:

- The passing on of knowledge and experience (agricultural, social, botanical, meteorological, and so on). Ancient experiences in form of myths are handed down from generation to generation. Animal myths - dance and representation - played an important role for the hunting and tribal folk, as it was necessary to know and understand the habits of the animals. Even their language gives evidence of this. For instance, an extensive vocabulary was developed in relation to hunting, tracking and bagging of prey. All these resulted not only in the actual capturing of the animals, but also to ensure and protect the continuity of these creatures. Rules and regulations existed about when, how or how many animals were slaughtered. Closed seasons were indicated by taboos, the breaching of which was punished by sanctions. In this way, an over-exploitation of natural resources was overcome. (Today only a small number of hunting and tribal folk still exist, as their survival is dangerously threatened by the ever-increasing advance of modem civilization).

- One further aspect of traditional communication is the conveyance of moral concepts: moral and social standards such as legal patterns which rule the co-existence of human beings, their dealings with natural resources, and regulates their behaviour towards foreigners. Examples are to be found in stories, songs and proverbs, in which virtues are rewarded and weaknesses punished. (What is to be understood by virtue or weakness is laid down by the respective society on grounds of its human and worldly concept).

- Other myths and tales give answers to questions of vital significance to human being, such as the sense in grief, illness and death. These helped - and still help - by overcoming such situations.

- Information concerning historical events in the society as a whole or ancestral tale serves to form the identity of a person or a society, and strengthens their solidarity.

Activities which, from a utilitarian point of view, seem meaningless (for instance, story-telling, dancing, singing, performing of religious ceremonies), play however important roles in the functioning of social order and the ensuring of economic foundations. In this way traditional communications serve finally the survival of the group itself. Traditional forms of communication are ritually repeated on special occasions, for instance, of annual or lifetime celebrations. In this way, they renew and prove their worth and experience, and in so doing are communicated to the younger generation.

Traditional communication forms are a part of the culture of the relevant society. They are familiar to the members, and they are used by them and understood by all. Very often, they take the form of social events (for instance, parties, celebrations).

As with traditional communication means, the connection between life and survival is given once again here, as well as the active participation and involvement of all groups in the task of solving problems. Communication is no longer a one-way-street ruled by a dominant society. It would be desirable if this type of media work finds its rightful place in society as a whole at national and international levels, as also here the number of contributions received from the South" are steadily diminishing.

Information Dissemination in Traditional Societies: Patterns, Symbols and Meaning

Information is an important tool used in the realization of any objective or goal set by individuals. It remains the lifeblood of any individual or organization. It is a valuable resource required in any society; thus acquiring and using information are critical and important activities. Users of information use it for different reasons. Some use it for health; others use it for advancement in knowledge, others for politics. To all these people, information seeking is a fundamental human process closely related to learning and problem-solving (Goldfrab, 2006). Many factors initiate the search for information; among these are individual tasks for knowledge advancement, creativity and for future documentation. Information-seeking process depends on these tasks, and the complexity of the task/difficulty is an important factor that influences an individual in seeking information.

Information is now accepted as an important factor in the sustained development of any society because it reduces uncertainty and enhances awareness of possible actions to take to solving problems (Adimorah, 1995). Lack of information is argued to act as a barrier to development because of importance of information provision in 'capacity building' and 'empowering communities (Wakelin and Simelane, 1995).

Information and its appropriate dissemination are seen as critical resource for people and communities in both rural and urban areas (Okogbe, 2002). However, the lack of information provision in rural contexts remains a problem. Thus, there is alarming information gap that exists between rural and urban areas and how little is being done to bridge this gap (Moyo, 1994). It is assumed that if we know the factors which influence information need and the demand for the information, we are likely to be in a better position to design better information systems and services. Therefore, it is' important to ascertain and distinguish between the information needs of an individual or group as well as how such information needs are passed or channeled to meet these needs.

Drums

Before the advent of conventional mass communication, all the major functions of modern mass media were carried out in Yoruba land through the talking drums. Whenever there is a danger, be it in form of invasion or war, the people would be alerted through talking drums. Interestingly, the traditional African communication system still survives in spite of the threat and encroachment of foreign culture and

modern means of Mass Communication. Music played a lot of role in the traditional African communication and is still relevant till today. Various forms of drums are available in all the surveyed communities. The list ranges from "Gangan" otherwise known as talking drum to "Gbedu", the Oba's drum. The sound of the drums and the way it is beaten will convey a message to the hearer depending on socially constructed meaning attached to such sound and the intended message. For example, the music of Oshugo among the Remo-Yoruba will tell people about the burial of an important member of the community, while 'Gbedu which is a common and very important drum across Yoruba land' is beaten when an Oba joins his ancestors or a new one is crowned. Whenever 'Gbedu' drum is being beaten, no other drums could be beating at that particular point in time. 'Gangan' on the other hand is also very useful in information dissemination adding that when a visitor approaches the Oba's palace, the man in charge of the talking drum will beat it to alert the oba that a visitor is approaching the palace. Not only that, if there is going to be a war, it is the talking drum that is used to communicate to the town's people. In that way, the people get the message, and they react to it appropriately. Thus, drums could be beaten in different styles for different purposes. Members of 'Ogboni' confraternity could use it as a call for a meeting as it is being practised. These drums are so powerful that the sound they produce can travel almost one kilometer, especially during the harmattan season.

A drum was used originally for communication between villages. It is usually an hourglass shaped two-headed drum where the heads are laced together with thongs of gut or leather. The drum is typically held between the arm and body so that varying pressure can be applied to the thongs which alter the drum's pitch, thus 'talking'. Talking drums are part of a family of hourglass shaped pressure drums; in the Yoruba language of West Africa, these include "gan gan" (the smallest member of this drum family) or "dun dun" (the largest of the talking drums). The drum heads at either end of the drum's wooden body are made from hide, fish-skin or other membranes which are wrapped around a wooden hoop. Leather cords or thongs run the length of the drum's body and are wrapped around both hoops. When you squeeze these cords under your arm, the drum heads tighten, changing the instrument's pitch.

Drums have often symbolized the power of a traditional political leader, and skilled drummers have held considerable status in these West African communities. While this type of instrument can be modulated quite closely, its range is limited to a gathering or market-place, and it is primarily used in ceremonial settings, including dance, rituals, story-telling and communication of points of order.

One of the unique features of the instruments is their ability to closely imitate the rhythms and intonations of spoken language. In the hands of skilled performers, they can reproduce the sounds of proverbs or praise songs through a specialized 'drum language' - their dialogue can be easily understood by a knowledgeable audience. Whether the beating of the drum is accompanied by dances or sending messages, the sound of these instruments can be transmitted along many miles.

The various beats of the drum are suggestive of different signals in Umuofia (as exemplified by Chinua Achebe in *Things Fall Apart*) and by extension the Igbo community. This medium is fast gaining universal application in Africa. The narrator comments that "the drum beat the unmistakable wrestling dance – quick, light and gay, and it came floating on the wind. Within this source, it was further shown that Okonkwo (the principal character in the novel) explains that the drum has not been beaten to announce the death of Ndulue because of his wife Ozoemena. Signals also

come in the text in the form of gunshots meant to celebrate the transition of prominent persons. It is in one of such celebrations that Okonkwo inadvertently kills Ezeudu's son and eventually goes into exile.

Folk media

Folk media is mainly engaged as an oral tradition. Folk media are intangible artifact of a culture, made up of customs, traditions, stories, songs, religion, performance arts and superstition. It can be considered to be the memory of a collective people. Its survival is premised on its ability to meet the needs of the cultural group and hold meaning for the people around whom it is centred. Folk media may involve virtually everyone in a community as well as people from outside.

This form of media has developed a rich pattern of expression in all cultures. It is used to transmit information from one generation to another in a ritualised fashion. Folk media, which comprises of broad range of art forms, is used primarily for entertainment as well as to promote education, values, cultural identity and continuity to meet the needs of the cultural group. Folklores, proverbs and parables are folk media and means of information dissemination in Nigerian towns and villages (Akpan, 1977 and Otasowie, 1981; Nwuneli, 1983).

Folklore is story from a particular place that was originally passed on to people in a spoken form (Hornby, 2000). Folklores and storytelling constitute a common feature in most African traditional societies. In rural Africa, during the moonlight, children would sit around elders listening to stories. Nwuneli (1983) found out that folklore in Nigeria touches every aspect of life. Folklore is common to the Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba races. Folklores (*alo* in Yoruba and *Inu* in Ukwuani) in Nigeria touch every aspect of life. African story tellers narrate memorised historical epics and genealogies at length. Conventionally, folk stories are told to children especially in the evenings, that is, after the day's work when people are relaxing before going to bed. So, it is not unusual at this particular time of the day to find many children gathered around an elderly person, mostly women, to listen to folk stories. Generally in Africa, children gather around elders who tell them stories under moonlight, and sometimes this could involve song, singing and clapping of hands. The children are allowed to participate by contributing to lessons learnt from the stories, and the children are encouraged to adhere to the positive sides always.

Mede (1998:2) revealed that "folktales are actually part of mythology of the Tiv people of Benue State in Nigeria". They explain certain supernatural events and facts in life. This may account for the argument that folklores are vehicles for transmitting cultural information. It is originally structured to entertain. It can be used to promote development and acceptable behaviour in society. Since children are allowed to participate by contributing to the lessons learnt from the stories, they are encouraged to adhere to the positive sides always. The folklore medium plays a very important role in the socialisation of children in African communities because the medium is primarily used to educate and inculcate the traditional social values into the children, apart from entertaining them. For the old people, the folklore medium serve as means of social control, especially in reinforcing the traditional values that have already been acquired. Such traditional values include honesty, integrity, hard work and faithfulness.

Poetry

Poetry is another type of communication in traditional African societies. Although it is an old traditional African communication strategy, it is still very relevant in the day-to-day life of the people of the surveyed communities. In Yoruba land, members of the community use poetry a lot, most especially the praise poetry (Oriki). This affords the people an insight into what had happened in the past. It affords the opportunity of acquiring knowledge about family history. Like in the Yoruba land, the Igbo also use songs to praise the successful elders or winners of wrestling bouts (Odunlami, 2006). This is also common among other ethnic groups, especially the Hausa in Northern part of Nigeria.

Town Crier

In the traditional African settings where most residents are not formally educated, the mode of passing information to such categories of people is through town-criers. This medium of information dissemination is found to be effective, cheap, simple and reliable (Abraham, 2009). The uses of Town Criers are still in vogue in some traditional towns and villages in Africa and some parts of the Caribbean (Meyer, 2005). Town criers play the role of modern radio by announcing important messages. They are used whenever there is a message to pass to the people; it is the town crier that will take the 'gong' and beat it. Immediately that is done, everybody will be attentive to receive the oba's message. This medium is still in use in the rural area in the face of the pervading influence of radio and television. It becomes very handy when the message to be passed across is urgent.

In this medium of communication, designated persons are employed as honorary official announcers of the community whenever needs arise. Whatever they announce are responsibilities of the community. Just like the modern new media, their announcements cover everybody within the community. Town announcers are mainly rewarded through barter in Emu Kingdom (a clan of Ukwani speaking people in Ndokwa West Local Government Area of Delta State- Nigeria). They are rewarded by exempting them from community labour and offered other remunerations during Council of Elders' meetings whenever gifts are shared or distributed. In the words of Ogwezzy (1999) it is the quickest and widest way of news relaying by the traditional way. It is still the people's main news media at the grass root.

Most of the pieces of information disseminated by the town announcer usually originate from some authoritative source such as the Emir, Oba, Council of Elders, or from someone or Age Grade with delegated powers to perform specific tasks for the village or town (Nwuneli, 1983). It is these authoritative sources that determine the content of the town crier's message. The attention gaining medium chosen by the village announcer depends on what has previously been accepted by the town or village, and the choice of channels could vary from gongs of various sizes and shapes to bells and drums.

The post of the village announcer or the Alaago or Akede in Yorubaland is in most cases hereditary. According to Ugboajah (1980), an Ijebu village announcer trains his children in the communication jobs that await them. Thus, the young village announcer must be briefed in his early years about the time, place and utility of the news and about technicalities in the use of the gong

In Hausa land, the announcer is called Mai Shela/Sankira; the Igbo call him Otiekwe, while he is known as Alaago/Akede Ilu among the Yoruba. He is the

legendary figure, aided by the general belief that he is the appointee of Allah, but he is selected by the Sariki or ruler of the village. Being revered and respected as a holy man, his body is inviolate, and his announcements undoubted. The culmination of his yearly responsibilities is when he predicts and announces the date and sighting of religious Ramadan moon.

In Isukwuator village, in Imo State the village announcer is a jester and a confidant of the elders and the Ofor (title holders). He has been described as, 'an institution synonymous with traditional authority'. It is to his credit that he was found very useful in the rehabilitation of the villages following the civil disturbances in this area of Nigeria. The functions of the village announcer known variously as the village bell man or town crier in Nigeria are similar despite the great linguistic and ethnic diversities in the country (Nwuneli, 1983).

The bell man indeed occupies an important position in the diffusion of messages within the belief systems of the various ethnic groups in Nigeria and in their opinion formation processes and actions (Wilson, 1982). The intimate relationship between the source of the information and the audience creates a bond of trust which always determines the reliability of any information received and shows that the town crier is a trained professional with noble mind and wits. He is an eloquent interpreter of his chiefs' messages and well tutored in traditions and proverbs (Ugboajah, 1979). Beside these, the bell man is a trusted confidant, whose loyalty to the village authority is indisputable. In contrast with what is obtained in modern mass media, the bell man discharges his duties efficiently and conscientiously too since he is a part of the village system, and his task of news dissemination was never competitive or profit-oriented (Wilson, 1982). This explains why the various ethnic groups attach great importance to traditional communication, and since traditional media are said to have force and credibility, they put stability into Nigeria's indigenous institutions (Ugboajah, 1991).

Wooden Gun

Another traditional instrument of communication is the wooden or Dane gun. This is however peculiar to rural towns especially in Yoruba traditional setting. When an important chief or member of the hunters dies, it is traditional to honour the departed soul with gun salute. Immediately the people hear the sound of the gun, the meaning is easily decoded. In Igbo culture, signals also come in the form of gunshots meant to celebrate the transition of prominent persons. It is in one of such celebrations that Okonkwo, in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart,* inadvertently kills Ezeudu's son and eventually goes into exile (Odunlami, 2006).

Masquerades and Oro Cults

In Yoruba mythology, masquerade is perceived first as representative of the departed ancestors and secondly as a medium of entertainment. There are seven different types of masquerades representing each of the compounds or clans in a community. Each of them comes out to perform at events such as "oro festival" or 'Egungun' festival. It is however instructive to note that each of the masquerades conveys oba's message(s) to the people in each clan. In some Yoruba towns, only masquerades come out to convey the message to the people. When the people see masquerades on such occasions, they quickly decode the message that something has happened.

In the past, special masquerades were used to convey some special messages such as war as well as the death of an oba. In contemporary times, the masquerades are mainly used as a form of entertainment (Popoola, 2004). Among the Igbo in southeast Nigeria, masquerades emerged at night to gossip and expose scandals like modern columnists except that the masquerades' freedom of expression knew no laws of libel and sedition. The Yoruba 'Oro' and Igbo 'Isato' masquerades are indicated by Nwuneli (1983) as being used as effective channels of communication in the maintenance of village security or discipline in some parts of southern Nigeria.

While some Yoruba villages might use the 'Oro' cult to keep away intruders from their villages, some Igbo villages use the 'Isato'' masquerade to ward off thieves from their villages and towns. The 'Oro' explained by Nwuneli (1983), is an ancestral cult organisation whose symbol is the bull roarer. It is used in proclaiming curfew when riots are expected and in apprehending criminals and reducing crime.

The use of Aroko

Aroko is a symbol-object or a collection of such objects usually parceled together and sent through a messenger to another person for the purpose of conveying a message to be decoded by the receiver. It is a traditional means of communication that existed in a predominantly pre-literate Yoruba society and usually it is sent by hand through a courier or messenger. It is often wrapped in leaves, put in a sack, in a calabash or any other suitable container (Ogundeji, 1997).

The use of material objects packaged together in specific ways was the traditional system of sending messages to people among the Yoruba people in the past. It is a form of local communication among the Yoruba, which is often used whenever there is an urgent message to be sent. Against the ecological background of the Yoruba communities the choice of certain vegetational, animal or other resources in the area could be justified as man can only use the resources available to him. 'Aroko' usually comprise Kolanut, a bottle of drink, bitter cola and little oil, wrapped up with a bunch of leaves. This traditionally represents a letter from the oba through his messenger to his chiefs whenever there is an urgent matter to discuss or pass across. When the receiver gets it, he must comply immediately. In the rural and semi-urban towns of some Yoruba towns, according to Popoola (2004), palm frond is used as another form of communication. In a situation where people are fighting over a plot of land or an economic tree, such as Mahogany, 'Iroko' and so on, palm frond is tied round such tree in the case or other trees on the disputed land to signify that nobody should touch the tree or do anything on the land. As a symbol of communication, pepper was one of the means through which news of an impending war with another community could be broken. When a community intends to wage war with another community, all the heads of the community needs doing is just to wrap two or three pieces of pepper with leaf and send 'parcel' to the head of the community to be engaged in war. It is however no longer in use.

Opadokun (1986) describes Aroko as a non-verbal traditional system of communication among the Yoruba that was in vogue before the advent of the Europeans in Nigeria. Aroko involves sending an item or a combined number of items to a person from which the decoder is expected to infer a piece of information. Before the colonization era in Nigeria, Yoruba had been using various signs, including parts of body to communicate to another person far and near. Yoruba used eyes (starring) to attract, accommodate or repel; nose (wrinkling) to cheapen or rubbish; head (nodding)

to indicate approval or disapproval; hand (waving) to call or bid farewell; finger nails (spreading) to castigate/insult one's mother and lots more.

Traditional attires in Yoruba are also a means of non-verbal communication. For instance, certain clothes and costumes put on by an individual signify the identity of such people, for example, a hunter, farmer, bride, king, chief, and priest. Aroko could be sent by a traditional ruler or chief, Ifa priest, Ogboni cult member, Hunter, Artisan or an ordinary person to a fellow counterpart or any other person, group or body.

In certain situations, aroko can be delivered by a domestic animal like a dog. For instance, if an item known as Obu-o-toyo, which is a caricature of salt, is wrapped and tied on the neck of a dog and the dog sent home. The receiver shall get the message that those working in farm need salt for their food. The salt will be consequently wrapped and tied on the neck of the same animal transmitter for onward delivery (Abdullahi-Idiagbon, 2009).

Purpose of Usage, Classification and Interpretation of Symbols of Aroko among the Yoruba

The use of Aroko within the society is understandable through the purpose it is serving among the adopters. Here, these purposes and classification which Opadokun (1986) states as being for convenience rather than consensus of views, as well as the interpretation presented to various forms of Aroko according to Abdullahi-Idiagbon (2009) are stated herein.

Purpose of Usage and Adoption of Aroko

- Maintenance of the secrecy of the message being passed across; in most cases, the bearer of an aroko might not be aware of the content let alone its interpretation. Even, the bearer might be the conveyer of his own death sentence.
- For the avoidance of verbal message and its concomitant shortcoming features like omission, misconception, manipulation or distortion.
- For the expression of comradeship, confidence and solidarity among various secret cult members.
- To reinforce the authenticity of the message by often accompanying an *Aroko* with a widely known personal belonging of the sender to mark his identity.

The Functional Classification of Aroko

Category One: Warning to an individual or a community. Examples are leaves of an Odan tree, a stick of broom.

Category Two: Admonition/punishment - a parrot egg, binding of an arrow and a gun

Category Three: Announcement -. Akoko leaves (a kind of tree) bitter kola

Category Four: Road directives - Putting a stone at a junction or money beside a bunch of banana.

Category Five: Expression of affection/feelings - sending a half chewed chewing stick to a widow.

Category Six: Pleading - pineapple, a combination of items of cam, salt and palm oil.

Interpretation of Aroko through the Symbols Adopted

According to Abdullahi-Idiagbon (2009), when an iconic image of a particular man is placed in front of his house, with the man's physical identity like trademark on his right cheek and a different trademark on the left side, it signifies that a man of the identity described in front of whose house such image is displayed is having an illegitimate secret affair with a woman nearby and whose tribal mark is on the left cheek. It is a warning that the two actors in the illicit act should be exposed publicly as this icon is exposed to the public.

Also, Odan which is a big tree mostly planted to provide shade and food for goats and sheep signifies that in spite of the size, beauty and value of this tree, it is just a mere food for goats. This object is also a warning signal.

A comb is a tool for separating rough hairs in order to be smooth. However, its interpretation when used as Aroko will depend on who is sending it and the relationship between the sender and the receiver. If it is sent by and to a lover, it is an indication of imminent separation between them. However, if it is sent to hairdresser, it is an invitation to come and plait for an about-to-wed bride.

Symbol like a half-chewed chewing stick sent to an in-law signifies that their daughter has been defiled before her marriage and that her husband did not meet her as a virgin. On the other hand, if a half-chewed chewing stick is sent to a widow by a man, this indicates an expression of affection. The stick signifies that either or both of them have tasted marriage. The acceptance or rejection of the stick signifies either positive or negative response respectively.

Also, personal identity markers like a cap, ring or whisker are used to accompany an aroko to testify or confirm the genuineness of the source of such aroko.

A parrot egg covered in a calabash is a symbol of notoriety; it symbolizes that such an individual, usually a traditional ruler, has been rejected by his people. The traditional ruler is expected to commit suicide.

Arrow and gun are symbols of war; this sign is mostly sent by and to a hunter meaning that the receiver is banned from further hunting. Failure to comply is a preparedness to go into war with the sender(s). It is used for admonition or punishment for turning deaf ears to the earlier warning.

Certain fruits like pineapple, bitter kola and the like are also symbols being adopted for aroko among the Yoruba. The pineapple, for instance, has a sweet juice though its outside appearance is not smooth. It signifies perseverance and optimism. Bitter kola, on the other hand, indicates that all is not well at home and that the attention of such receiver is urgently needed.

The sender and receiver need to be skillful in the art of interpretation of an aroko sign. This is enhanced by possessing a common knowledge on how an aroko works. For the sender, he has to be competent in encoding or packaging his aroko message. He should be aware of the signification of a wrong or faulty packaging. The receiver on the other hand can employ the service of an expert if he cannot interpret or is not sure of his ability. The transmitter is the channel through which an aroko passes from the sender to the receiver. He is expected to be a trustworthy and honest bearer of an aroko because if he tampers with the quality, quantity or form of the aroko, the meaning may be affected. Apart from the competence and trust involved among the three players involved in aroko, role relation between the sender and receiver also plays a considerable and integral part in whatever the interpretation an aroko would bear.

If certain sum of money and a commodity like a bunch of banana are juxtaposed, it is an index of the cost price of such commodity. An interested passer-by buys the commodity by putting same sum of money before he takes the fruit.

Numbering is another form of aroko which is of semiotic significance. For instance, one symbolizes completeness, fullness and wholeness. That is why a full keg of wine sent to a bridal in-law is an indication that their newly wedded daughter is complete and met a virgin by her husband. However a half means that she has been defiled before marriage.

Odd numbers like three and five are exclusive to Ifa priests and Ogboni cult members; only the initiates could interpret the content. But if the item is five, it is a form of summon, then the receiver is expected to appear personally within five days ultimatum or else face the wrath of the group. Numbers seven and ten are also used to summon, though restricted to the cult or Ifa members.

Number six symbolizes affection and love. It is commonly used to express passionate feelings and affection among admirers or lovers. Number eight also indicates peace, good health and security. It is used to allay the fear of and guarantee the receiver that all is well.

Number nine is a symbol of a looming danger. The context and shared knowledge of the discourse participants would illuminate what the danger is all about.

A sign of aroko could have different interpretations depending on the sender, status and context. A good example of this is a handful of sand. If it is wrapped and given to a hunter's wife; it is an indication that it was a friend to that hunter who helped the former's wife to lift her luggage on her head. On the other hand, if a culprit is given a handful of sand, it indicates he is sent to exile based on the offence committed. This same sign can be a testimony that the bearer is truly from a friend (who is the sender) to a receiver.

Metal Bell

In Yoruba land, it is called Agogo. This is a single or multiple bell now used throughout the world. The agogo may be the oldest samba instrument and was based on West African Yoruba single or double bells. The African agogo bell is also called the gangkogui or gonkogui. It is made of metal with each bell a different size. This allows a differently pitched note to be produced depending on which bell has been hit. Originally wrought iron, they are now manufactured in a variety of metals and sizes for different sound qualities. The most common arrangement is two bells attached by a U shaped piece of metal. The smaller bell is held uppermost. Either bell may be hit with a wooden stick to make a cowbell-like sound or less commonly a clicking sound is produced by squeezing the two bells together.

It is known as Ogene in the Igbo language. Ogene is an instrument used to communicate with the ancestors in Igbo culture. When the elders are about to pray in front of their shrines, they use ogene to speak to their gods and ancestors. Just like the men use ekwe, women use ogene to call themselves together if they have a meeting or something to summon to themselves. Ogene has a male and female parts. One can explicitly hear and note the difference from the sound. The sound itself comes from the vibration of the iron body when struck, which is made to resound by the hollow inside of the bell. The iron body is usually struck with a soft wooden stick in order to make sound out of it. There is only one thing which can destroy ogene. It is an ant.

That is the reason why it is not advisable to leave ogene on the ground because when the ant injects something on it, one can never hear the sound again. However, a broken ogene is still potent; one can still hear the sound from it when in use, but when the ant touches them, one cannot.

Colour Scheme

The use of colour scheme in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* manifests in the people's tradition of drawing patterns usually in white, yellow and dark green or painting themselves with camwood before festivals (Odunlami, 2006). In either of these instances, white is impliedly suggestive of purity and peace, while green symbolizes fertility, black (evil), red (danger) and blue stands for love. There is similarity among the Igbo and Yoruba in terms of colour scheming and interpretation of what each colour stands for.

Kakaki and Other Forms of Instrument of Communication

The kakaki is a three to four metre long metal trumpet used in Hausa traditional ceremonial music. Kakaki is the name used in Chad, Burkina Faso, Niger and Nigeria. The instrument is also known as Waza in Chad and Sudan, and malakat in Ethiopia. The kakaki originally comes from Songhai cavalry. Its sound is associated with royalty and it is only played at events at the palace of the king or sultan in Hausa societies. It is used as part of the sara, a weekly statement of power and authority. Kakaki are exclusively played by men.

Kakaki as an instrument is also used by the Tiv people of Benue State (in the North central geopolitical zone of Nigeria) to convey special messages to the people of the community, such messages as the new born child of the King, his naming ceremony, the crowning of a new king, to gather people together during the marriage ceremony of the king and the king's son's marriage ceremony. This instrument was used to convey all the messages to the people to assemble at the square for the ceremony, as well as when there is an enemy attack on the community; a warning sound of the Kakaki is blown to alert those whom can defend the society and every citizen to be alert.

Ilyu is another instrument used among the Tiv. It is a light wooden instrument used to pass messages to the people of the village, probably for the invitation of the people for a particular meeting of the elders at the king's palace or for the people to gather at the market square for a message from or by the king. It is now used as an instrument to indicate the death of someone. *Indyer* on its own is a heavy wooden instrument carved out of mahogany trunk by the Tiv people. It is used especially during festivals of masquerades, yam festival with music to pass messages for ceremonies, celebration of good harvest for the year. *Adiguve* is also an instrument peculiar to the Tiv people. It's an instrument like a violin, used for music and dances in conjunction with *Agbande* at festivals and dance occasions, sometimes to announce the death of a leader or an elder of the community. During this period it is played sorrowfully for the mourning of the dead; often it is played at funerals.

Conclusion

It is obvious that no society is left behind in terms of technological advancement as events have shown that at one point in time,, people were able to fashion out one instrument or the other in order serve their social and political needs. Typical in this

case are the media of passing information across within traditional societies. There are several things most of the societies share in common with differences manifesting in the concepts by which these instruments are called in their respective locales. It was equally demonstrated that traditional mass media have being playing vital roles in developmental processes of the people. Unlike the mass media, access to the traditional mass media is culturally determined and not economic. Only the selected groups of young men or the elders have the mandate of disseminating information generally. These forms of media are better transmitters of communication because they belong to the community and not to individuals, state or private/public industry. At the same time, local talents and localized messages have more credibility than those centralized ones emanating now from state capitals. Acceptability, cultural relevance, entertainment value, localized language, legitimacy; flexibility, instant two-way communication, and so on are among the virtues of these means of information dissemination.

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